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The Epistle to the Ephesians. By JOSEPH PARKER. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1904. Pp. 272. \$1.25.

The Epistles to the Colossians and Thessalonians. By JOSEPH PARKER. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1904. Pp. 303. \$1.25.

These volumes, the second of which includes a treatment not only of the epistles mentioned in the title, but also of the letter to Philemon, are the first to appear in the series entitled "The Practical and Devotional Commentary on the New Testament," and edited by Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll. A part of the publishers' announcement is intended to indicate the character of this series: "Thoroughly alive to the necessity of taking advantage of every help that modern scholarship offers, this commentary will at the same time retain a healthy conservatism of judgment." More informing, however, is the general title of the series which quite accurately describes the volumes before us. They are quite unlike the ordinary commentary to which we go for exegetical help. There is no treatment, either directly or by implication, of any questions of introduction. There is no formal attempt at exegesis, though a little of this—of a more or less accurate kind—filters in here and there. And this is true not only as regards the interpretation of this verse or that, but also in that there is no effort to set forth the apostle's main purpose in the several letters, or to show their development of thought. The books are commentaries only in the sense that they are made up of more or less disconnected comments on the several epistles, verse by verse, which comments consist of interpretative applications to religious thought and life. Viewed as commentaries in this sense of the word, these books have both defects and excellencies. It is difficult to see how the publishers' claim to influence by modern scholarship is supported by these first samples of the series. Practically no modern position is reflected by the author and certainly none is advocated, though this statement is not intended to imply that the books lack scholarly tone. Moreover, quite in contrast with the spirit of modern scholarship, a dogmatic point of view is allowed to obtrude itself, sometimes even where one would least expect it. The point of view need not be objected to, though its dominance of interpretation may be cause for criticism. To these defects is added a literary fault. The books are apparently posthumous (bearing the date 1904, while Dr. Parker died in 1902), and show some lack of cohesion and some incompleteness, apparently due to this fact. They are undoubtedly—in particular the volume on Ephesians, which especially lacks completeness and proportion—compilations made up of readings, lectures, and sermons on different verses and larger parts

of the several epistles. It is not surprising, therefore, that in some places where we might wish a comment there is none.

But, after all is said, these defects may be all but forgotten in view of the real value of the books. Though indictments may be lodged against their literary quality, nevertheless, their brusque and straightforward style is almost always refreshing, sometimes even brilliant. Dr. Parker's pulpit fame will suffer little from these publications. Yet their literary value is the least part of their worth. The practical and devotional purpose of the volumes is well realized. They oftentimes throb with heart-felt religious life, and they are filled with nourishment for warm and abiding loyalty to Christ in practical living. Moreover, this devotional warmth is accompanied by practical application of truth which is calculated to give real help. At the same time, the books contain much that stimulates thought, not only in the direction of sermonic suggestions to preachers and writers, but more especially—and this is the more important point—in the direction of devotional and practical meditation. If one desires stimulation for religious thinking and life, and wishes to secure it through consideration of the epistles of Paul which are treated in these volumes, he will do well, in spite of the defects mentioned, to read and ponder over these books.

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